

Terminal Evaluation Review form, GEF Evaluation Office, APR 2013

1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		2702	
GEF Agency project ID		3422	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF 4	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		UNDP	
Project name		Strengthening and Catalyzing the Sustainability of Nicaragua's Protected Areas System	
Country/Countries		Nicaragua	
Region		LAC	
Focal area		Biodiversity	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		OP 1 – Arid and Semi-Arid Zone Ecosystems, OP 2- Coastal, Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems, OP 3- Forest Ecosystems Strategic Program BD-1: Sustainable financing of PA systems at the national level	
Executing agencies involved		Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) [Lead] United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Integrated Project for Watershed Management, Water Supply and Sanitation (PIMCHAS), Corazón Project, Nicaraguan Institute for Fisheries and Aquaculture (INPESCA), Nicaraguan Institute of Tourism (INTUR), Municipal Governments, INATEC, LIDER, Friends of the Earth, CUCULMECA, SAF-CAFTA	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Friends of the Earth	
Private sector involvement		None noted.	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) /Approval date (MSP)		7/9/2008	
Effectiveness date / project start		December 2008	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		12/31/2012	
Actual date of project completion		December 2012	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding	0.35	
	Co-financing		
GEF Project Grant		1.8	1.76
Co-financing	IA/EA own		
	Government		
	Other*		
Total GEF funding		2.15	1.76
Total Co-financing		3.82	4.24
Total project funding (GEF grants + co-financing)		5.97	5.99
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		April 2013	
TE submission date		12/1/2013	
Author of TE		Ninette Montes, Patricio Jerez	
TER completion date		February 19, 2014	
TER prepared by		Dania Trespalacios	
TER peer review by (if GEF EO review)		Joshua Schneck	

2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF EO Review
Project Outcomes	S	MS	MS	MS
Sustainability of Outcomes	Not rated	MU	MU	ML
M&E Design	Not rated	S	S	S
M&E Implementation	Not rated	MS	MS	S
Quality of Implementation	S	MS	MS	S
Quality of Execution	S	MS	Not rated	S
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report	--	--	S	HS

3. Project Objectives

3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The Global Environmental Objective is to improve the Nicaraguan Protected Areas System (SINAP in Spanish) through legal reforms, strengthened institutions, sustainable financing and partnerships, and thus ensure better protection and management of biodiversity.

Nicaragua is an important component of the Central American Biological Corridor. Biodiversity in Nicaragua is threatened by habitat decline, fragmentation of ecosystems, and loss of species diversity. The project seeks to reduce the loss of globally significant biodiversity by removing institutional and systemic barriers to effective PA management and therefore improve conservation. (Project Document for CEO Endorsement, pg. 8)

3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The development objective of this project was to increase the capacity and effectiveness of the Nicaraguan Protected Area System (SINAP). The specific project components outlined in the Project Document for CEO approval included:

- 1- strengthened policy and legal framework that improves SINAP management
- 2- PA management responsibilities shared by key stakeholders
- 3- development of sustainable financing of SINAP and PAs
- 4- Institutional management and learning within project and MARENA

3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation?

There were no changes in the global environmental or development objectives from the start to the conclusion of this project. The TE states that "During the implementation period, some of the target indicators for immediate outputs were reformulated, but the overall objective and the outcomes remained intact." (TE pg. 11)

4. GEF EO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

Please refer to the GEF Terminal Evaluation Review Guidelines for detail on the criteria for ratings.

Relevance can receive either a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating. For Effectiveness and Cost efficiency, a six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess. Sustainability ratings are assessed on a four-point scale: Likely=no or negligible risk; Moderately Likely=low risk; Moderately Unlikely=substantial risks; Unlikely=high risk. In assessing a Sustainability rating please note if, and to what degree, sustainability of project outcomes is threatened by financial, sociopolitical, institutional/governance, or environmental factors.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 Relevance	Rating: Satisfactory
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The project outcomes are consistent with the GEF’s long term objectives and strategic programs for the focal area of Biodiversity in GEF-4, including catalyzing sustainability of PA systems, safeguarding biodiversity, strengthening terrestrial PA networks, and increasing representation of effectively managed marine PA areas in PA systems.

The project seems to have been designed from the start according to national priorities. The TE describes that the project was based on SINAP’s Strategic Development Plan of 2000, and designed with substantial support from key stakeholders (TE pg. 4)

As the TE relates, the project takes into account national priorities of poverty reduction by stimulating economic development among private property owners living in PAs. The project is in line with the Nicaraguan Environmental Plan (2001-2005), the National Human Development Plan (2009 – 2011), the National Environmental and Climate Change Strategy (2010-2015), and the National Biodiversity Strategy, which includes the promotion of economic viability of biodiversity (TE pg. 15-16)

4.2 Effectiveness	Rating: Moderately Satisfactory
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The strategic goal of the project was "The Nicaraguan society preserves biodiversity in- situ through a sustainable National Protected Areas System". The objective of this project was the effective management of the Nicaraguan Protected Areas System (SINAP) through legal reforms, strengthened institutions, sustainable financing and partnerships (Project Document CEO Endorsement). The specific project outcomes include:

- 1- strengthened policy and legal framework that improves SINAP management
- 2- PA management responsibilities shared by key stakeholders
- 3- development of sustainable financing of SINAP and PAs
- 4- Institutional management and learning within project and MARENA

Each of these four outcomes had expected and actual goals, detailed in the table below.

Outcome	Expected Outputs	Results
Outcome 1 legal & policy framework	PA regulations reformed, including decentralized roles, increased visibility of SINAP, local financial mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SINAP Policy reformed and approved by MARENA - Regulations for renewable energy sector to pay 0.5% of earnings generated in PAs - Biodiversity Law reviewed and adjusted - New SINAP regulations under review and final adjustments
	70% awareness of economic, social, ecological value of SINAP among national & territorial decision makers	Survey to measure awareness not carried out
	Collaborative mgmt. with 20 municipal authorities, by 2012	Collaborative mgmt. with 40 municipal authorities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 agreements with multilateral donors - 1 agreement between municipality & PA - 2 agreements with national universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 agreements with multilateral donor (Friends of the Earth, UNOPS, Alianza, PIMCHAS, INATEC) - various agreements between municipalities and PAs in their territories - 4 agreements with national universities (León, Estelí, Somoto, Matagalpa)
Outcome 2 PA mgmt. shared with stakeholders	40 PAs with functioning local structures, systematically communicating with national level	- 19 PAs operate with Collaborative Management Committees
	20 PAs under collaborative mgmt., with 2012 standards	- 19 PAs operate with CMC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 alternate fishing experience developed. - Sustainable natural resource use projects in 20 PAs - Added value to one agricultural product from a PA - 2 PAs with certification systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no co-financing to develop sustainable use projects. They have been carried out in partnership (co-funding) with actors working in the area of influence of the PAs - Research consultations were conducted for the creation of breeding zoos for: iguanas, deer, lowland paca (guardatinaja), rural tourism, water trails, black conchs, caged fish and crocodiles - No activity was developed for adding value to agricultural products
Outcome 3 Sustainable financing of SINAP and PAs	Financial accounting reports in 22 PAs	5 PAs (Masaya Volcano, Somoto Canyon, Dipilto-Jalapa, La Cumplida and Yalí) prepare budgets and keep accounts with reports that register income and expenses
	Financial evaluation of 12 PAs. Improvements in financial mechanisms in 4 PAs.	Financial mechanisms were designed and implemented (at the pilot level) for environmental compensation for the goods and services produced in PAs, but number unknown
	Regulation for compensation of energy concessions for environmental mgmt.	A Legal and Technical Report was prepared and delivered to the

		authorities of MARENA
Outcome 4 Institutional learning established.	System established for information sharing	A system is in place that functions effectively

(TE pg. 12-13, 20-21, 27-33)

This project hoped to drive change through interventions at the national level, and at the local level. National “system” level interventions would create a facilitating environment (legislation, policies, etc.). Interventions at the local “territorial” level would pilot test financial and managerial components (payment systems for concessions, revenue tracking, etc.).

The outputs first proposed in the Project Document for CEO approval were revised in April 2011. According to the TE, the initial outputs depended on “external factors over which MARENA had no control”, and these were changed “to align them to the context, political reality, and priorities of the government”. Activities were “reoriented to the territorial level”. (TE pg. 20) For example, the goal of reforming the Protected Areas Law and the Fees Law was adjusted to “reform of PA regulations”. (TE pg. 28) However, the TE notes that the budget was not reprogrammed after these changes. (TE pg. 21)

The project was implemented in four pilot Protected Areas (Padre Ramos, Pilas -Hoyo, Dipilto-Jalapa and Datanlí-El Diablo) and influenced 28 Protected Areas over the course of its implementation.

The TE rates this project as marginally satisfactory, citing that, while expected outcomes were achieved at the territorial level, expected outcomes at the national level were not achieved. The Protected Areas Act and the Law of Fees were not passed, and some of the proposed financial tools and environmental regulations were still awaiting approval and implementation at project end. (TE pg. 6) The TE also explains that scope of the contribution of these achievements to the overall project objective was less than expected. (TE pg. 34)

The final PIR also rates the project marginally satisfactory. “At the territorial level, the project produced most of the outputs and it achieved the outcomes. At the national level, however, the Protected Areas Act and the Law of Fees were not passed... in general, the project contributed, though maybe not as much as expected, to improve the management of the PAs. The project managed to develop tools and capabilities to facilitate the contribution of stakeholders to the adequate management of PAs at the national level.” (PIR 2013 pg. 1)

Although the project indicators were revised mid project, they did not differ greatly from the original indicators. And although some achievements fell short of expected outputs (e.g. 19 PAs operate with Collaborative Management Committees, short of an expected 40), all four major project outcomes were successfully completed. The global environmental objective of this project, to improve the Nicaraguan Protected Areas System and thus ensure better protection and management of biodiversity, was successfully achieved, and results are expected to be sustainable. Project outcomes are commensurate with expectations, and effectively address the problems the project was meant to address. Were it not for the failure to pass the Protected Areas Act and the Law of Fees – objectives which were revised during the life of the project- this project would be rated as Satisfactory.

4.3 Efficiency	Rating: Satisfactory
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There was no implementation delay in this project. It was completed right on schedule, with no apparent problems with either the implementing agency or the executing agency. Pilot projects were combined with environmental education campaigns; partnerships were effective at leveraging resources and funds. From these data points, the project appears to have been implemented in a cost-effective manner.

4.4 Sustainability	Rating: Moderately Likely
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The TE rates the sustainability of this project as “Moderately Unlikely”, stating “It cannot be categorically stated whether these actions will survive past the termination of the project, but neither can be certified that they will be lost. It will all depend on the overall institutional management, on the coordination and dialogue with donors and on the actors in the territories.” (TE pg. 37)

The two major risks to project sustainability identified by the project were (1) the effect of rising inflation, and (2) the effect of governmental change during the project’s implementation. According to the TE, neither of these two events affected the project negatively: inflation remained constant, and thus did not affect the project’s implementation, and the political change seemed to be beneficial to the project. (TE pg. 17)

The TE also notes that “situations are visible that suggest that conditions are in place in the platform built through this project that could lead to the desired impact in terms of progressing towards the hoped-for change of state.” (TE pg. 37)

This project successfully established and operationalized structures that incorporate community engagement and ownership in PR management. It reformed policy and regulations, and it pilot tested new financial tools for conservation. For its achievements in management systems and development of partnerships, the sustainability of this project is rated moderately likely.

5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes

5.1 Co-financing. To what extent was the reported co-financing essential to the achievement of GEF objectives? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

Co-financing was central to the achievement of GEF objectives, since many project components depended exclusively on co-financing, and the total project amount was composed in large part of co-financing.

5.2 Project extensions and/or delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

There were no project extensions or project delays. The project was finished on the original deadline.

5.3 Country ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links:

The TE does not comment on country ownership.

6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory=no shortcomings in this M&E component; Satisfactory=minor shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Satisfactory=moderate shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Unsatisfactory=significant shortcomings in this M&E component; Unsatisfactory=major shortcomings in this M&E component; Highly Unsatisfactory=there were no project M&E systems.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

6.1 M&E Design at entry	Rating: Satisfactory
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The Project Document for CEO Approval describes a comprehensive M&E plan, with an assigned budget and clearly identified responsible parties for each M&E task.

6.2 M&E Implementation	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE states "Project monitoring was carried out through quarterly reports, AOPs, PIRs and Monitoring Committees" and also "Consistent coordination was achieved between the UNDP and the executing partner for operational and financial aspects." It rates the M&E implementation of this project Moderately Satisfactory.

This TE discusses the application of the project's M&E system in detail. There is no evidence to indicate that M&E was not performed properly. Thus, here it is given a rating of Satisfactory.

7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation includes the quality of project design, as well as the quality of supervision and assistance provided by implementing agency(s) to execution agencies throughout project implementation. Quality of Execution covers the effectiveness of the executing agency(s) in performing its roles and responsibilities. In both instances, the focus is upon factors that are largely within the control of the respective implementing and executing agency(s). A six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

7.1 Quality of Project Implementation	Rating: Satisfactory
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The TE states that project implementation was efficient because it applied the performance systems of MARENA and UNDP. "...the detailed planning of activities, the identification of indicators and goals, as well as the partnership agreements prior to approval of the project were adequate". (TE pg 15, 20)

The PIR rating for the UNDP Country Office Program Officer "who provides oversight and supervision support to the project" was moderately satisfactory in 2010, and raised to satisfactory for 2011, 2012 and 2013. The UNDP-GEF technical advisor is rated moderately satisfactory on most PIRs. Implementation progress is rated between moderately satisfactory and satisfactory during 2010-2013, the later being the final rating.

Based on project results and PIR evaluations, it seems that the quality of project implementation was generally satisfactory.

7.2 Quality of Project Execution	Rating: Satisfactory
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Neither the TE nor the PIRs provide detailed information on the quality of project execution. The PIRs from 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 rated the program manager/coordinator "managing the day to day operations of the project" as "Satisfactory". The TE does not seem to differentiate between the UNDP and MARENA, and does not describe implementation and execution differently. Based on PIR ratings and achievement of expected outcomes, it seems that the quality of project execution was generally satisfactory.

8. Lessons and recommendations

8.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects.

The TE lists the lessons learned from this project on pg 40:

Adequate time should be taken with adjustments to a project, to prevent large gaps between the expected outcomes initially designed and those obtained during implementation.

There is always a need for the participation of decision makers and stakeholders during all phases of the project cycle, especially during the implementation phase.

The decision makers involved in the design of the ProDoc were different from those involved in the implementation stage. As a result, it would be important to leave some time, during the stage of adjustments and updating, for the new decision makers to understand and appropriate the concept of the project.

The process, structure, and focus of the Collaborative Management Committees are practices that have improved governability and increased the effectiveness of protected area management, and should be reproduced throughout the system.

Activities that drive attitude changes, including training and sustainable use projects, are important to build awareness and responsibility for biodiversity protection among key stakeholder communities.

8.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

The TE lists recommendations for national level activities and for local level activities (pg 38-39).

At the national level, the government should build on the achievements and momentum created by the project, by reviewing and implementing the tools proposed in this project, continuously monitoring the actions already implemented, and developing further financial strategies. The structures created with the Collaborative Management Committees should be sustained and strengthened. Consolidating and replicating products and tools generated by the project could help advance implementation of project goals.

At the local level, the subsystems of Gulf of Fonseca, Madriz-Nueva Segovia and Matagalpa-Jinotega should be strengthened, as well as the structures created with the Collaborative Management Committees. Future plans should take advantage of the human resources gained at the local level thanks to this project.

A strategy for supporting pilot projects should be developed. In particular, conch breeding and floating fish cages show promise. The results of the project, established as a platform, should be turned into an obligatory ongoing process within MARENA and the partner organizations in the territories.

9. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

A six point rating scale is used for each sub-criteria and overall rating of the terminal evaluation report (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory)

Criteria	GEF EO comments	Rating
To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	The TE adequately identifies and assesses the relevant outcomes and impacts of this project, and considers the achievement of project objectives.	HS
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	The TE is internally consistent, and the ratings are well substantiated. However, the TE did not consider the performance of the executing and implementing agencies separately.	S
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	The TE considers and adequately assesses project sustainability.	S
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	The lessons learned are quite project specific, and thus supported directly by evidence. They are comprehensive enough for other projects.	HS
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	The TE lists cost breakdown by co-financing source and quantity (pg. 22), and also by project component (pg. 24).	HS
Assess the quality of the report's evaluation of project M&E systems:	This TE discusses the application of M&E systems more explicitly than most projects, but does not make a reference to M&E activities throughout the project.	S
Overall TE Rating		HS

$$0.3 \times (a + b) + 0.1 \times (c + d + e + f)$$

$$0.3(11) + 0.1(22) = 5.5$$

10. Note any additional sources of information used in the preparation of the terminal evaluation report (excluding PIRs, TEs, and PADs).

This TER was completed using:

- *Project Implementation Review (2013, 2011)*
- *Request for CEO Endorsement (2008)*